Revelation 12

The Woman and The Dragon

"The seventh trumpet, having sounded, has opened the way for the revelation of the seven bowl judgments, but for that revelation to be meaningful, a sketch of the hidden forces behind this great climax of human history and of the personages that play a part in that climax is necessary." Alford

- In 2003 the New York Times cited a statistic that in recorded human history there have only been 268 years in which there were no wars. But that statistic only looks at wars between major countries. In fact, there has never been a year in human history where the entire world was completely free of war. War and conflict . . . and the death that results from them . . . are a persistent reality in this world. **Why is that?**

    - There are two primary reasons.

      1. First, because of our human depravity. Envy, greed, jealousy, hatred . . . all the things that make us sinful, depraved creatures motivate us to fight one another.

      2. But, secondly, the reason for wars and conflict is because Satan manipulates and influences men to fight. Satan stokes the flames of our natural depravity and incites men to even greater and more violent conflict. All the false religions of the world are called **the doctrines of demons** because they move men to worship demonic forces. And the primary motivation for most of the world's conflicts are because of religion. **And that's what Satan wants.**

- And while the world has never known a year of peace between nations, since Genesis 3 the world has never known a day of peace with Satan and his demons. **Mankind is the avowed enemy of Satan and we are in a constant and perpetual state of war with Satan. The problem for mankind is that they don't know it.**

- In Revelation chapters 10 and 11 we examined the interlude sections regarding John eating **the little scroll** (Rev. 10) and the **two witnesses** (Rev. 11:1-13).

    - Then, in Revelation 11:14-19 we have the announcement of the coming of **the seventh trumpet**, which results in the **seven bowl judgments**. But we will not actually see the **seven bowl judgments** described until chapters 15-16.

- William Mounce says that "chapters 12-14 are a background introduction to the bowl judgments. In this background we have the initial rebellion of Satan and a moving forward through time to show the unrelenting impact of that rebellion throughout history to the future time of unprecedented Satanic activity spanning the last three and one half years of the tribulation, culminating in the triumphant return of Christ."

- As mentioned at the beginning of this study, the while the book of Revelation should be interpreted literally, where possible, there is a great deal of symbolic and figurative language used to describe literal characters and events. Revelation chapters 12 and 13 probably have some of the greatest symbolic language found in Revelation. The use of symbolic language is used to add vividness to the narrative. **But while there is much symbolic language, the text also explains what is being**

symbolized. There is no reason not to interpret a literal meaning behind the symbolic language.

- In Revelation 12 there are three primary characters that are described with symbolic language . . . ***the woman, the dragon*** and ***the child.***

- Revelation 12 is divided into three parts:

  - Satan's history of war against Israel (Rev. 12:1-6)

  - Satan's future war in heaven and his expulsion from heaven (Rev. 12:7-12)

  - Satan pursuit and persecution of Israel during the Tribulation (Rev. 12:13-18)

Part 1— Satan's history of war against Israel (v. 1-6)

Revelation 12:1-6— 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- As I mentioned a moment ago, there are three main characters in v. 1-6 . . . ***a woman, a great red dragon*** and **the woman's *child***. To begin with, let's identify who these characters are.

- To begin with, Revelation 12:1 states that ***a great sign appeared in heaven***. What is a ***great sign***?

  - The term ***sign*** (Greek: *sēmeion*) means "something that is expressed symbolically, that points to a spiritual reality." A ***sign*** is intended to appeal to the understanding, while a ***wonder*** appeals to the imagination.

  - The fact that this is described as a ***great sign*** means that it is of great importance. It is important that we properly understand the meaning of the ***great sign*** of ***the woman*** in v. 1 and ***the great red dragon*** in v. 3.

- The first ***great sign*** John sees is ***a woman***. The obvious question is, **who is she?** The most common answers are:

  - Some support the view that the ***woman*** is **the virgin Mary**. This is the view of the Roman Catholic church, which points to v. 5 to support their view (***she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron***). But this view loses support because later, in v. 6, we see **the *woman* flees into the wilderness.**

- Some support the view that the ***woman*** represents **the saints of God in the Old and New Testament**. This view is unlikely since we see later, in Revelation 12:17, that there is a reference to ***the rest of her offspring***.

- By far, the greatest evidence, supported in the passage itself, is that the ***woman*** is **the nation of Israel**, for the following reasons:

  1. In the Old Testament Israel is often pictured as a ***woman***. Specifically, Israel is referred to in the Old Testament as **the wife of God** (e.g. Jeremiah 3:1; 3:20; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2:2).

  2. In Joseph's dream, in Genesis 37:9, we see the same description we see in Revelation 12:1 . . .

  Genesis 37:9— Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

  - In Genesis 37 - ***the sun*** represents **Jacob**, ***the moon*** is **Rachel**, and the ***eleven stars*** are his brothers, with **Joseph**, himself, being the **twelfth.** The twelve sons of Jacob are represented in Revelation 12:1 as ***a crown of twelve stars***.

  3. In several Old Testament passages Israel is portrayed as **a woman in labor** (cf. Isaiah 26:17-18; 66:7; Jeremiah 4:31; 13:21; Micah 4:10; 5:3)

  4. In Daniel 9:24, in the prophecy of the **70 weeks**, it is revealed to Daniel that . . .

  Daniel 9:24— "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.

  - All the events prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27, including the events of the 70th week . . . the Tribulation . . . are ordained **to bring Israel to national repentance and restoration** in their relationship with God.

  5. In Revelation 12:5 the ***woman*** is described as ***giving birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron***. This is the Messiah, who comes from Israel.

  6. In Revelation 12:2 the ***woman*** is described as ***crying out, being in labor and in pain to give birth***. These "labor pains" come upon ***the woman*** for several biblical reasons:

  - The nation of Israel has suffered as they have awaited their Messiah.

  - The nation of Israel has suffered under God's chastening hand for her sin.

  - The nation of Israel has suffered from the attacks of her mortal enemy, Satan, and his raging efforts to destroy both her and her child.

- Before we move on from this ***woman*** described in Revelation 12 it is important to see that this is not the only time the term ***woman*** is used in Revelation to describe a person or entity.

  - Here in Revelation 12 the term ***woman*** is used to refer to **the nation of Israel** in her perpetual struggle with **Satan.**

  - In Revelation 17 the term ***woman*** will also be used. But in Revelation 17 the term ***woman*** will be used to describe **a harlot** who represents the **evil and immoral world religious and political system**.

  - More about that when we get to Revelation 17 . . .

- The second ***great sign*** we see in Revelation 12 is described in v. 3 as ***a great red dragon***. Again, the question is, **who is this?**

  - Fortunately, we are not left to guess or speculate regarding the ***dragon's*** identity because he is explicitly identified in Revelation 12:9 . . .

    Revelation 12:9— And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.

  - Just as ***the woman*** is very descriptive of Israel's actions and function as a **wife and mother**, so Satan's actions and function are aptly represented by an intimidating, violent and ferocious ***great dragon***. Interestingly, only in the book of Revelation is Satan referred to or described as a ***dragon.***

  - The description of ***the great dragon*** being the color ***red*** is also significant in that ***red*** represents the color of **bloodshed and violence**. As John previous said of Satan in John 8:44 . . .

    John 8:44— "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

  - Furthermore, in Revelation 12:3 ***the dragon*** is described as ***having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.***

  - John does not immediately explain what these ***heads***, ***horns*** and ***diadems*** represent, but he will later in Revelation chapters 13 and 17. Briefly, the ***heads, horns*** and ***diadems*** represent . . .

    - ***seven heads***- denotes seven consecutive world powers that have persecuted Israel. They are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome (note that Rome is in power at the time of John's writing Revelation) revived Roman Empire, yet to come.

    - ***ten horns***- must be on the seventh head (the revived Roman Empire) to agree with Daniel's placement of the ten horns at the end of time: ***"As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom, ten***

kings will arise; and another will arise after them and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings." Dan 7:24

- ***"and on his head were seven diadems"— diadems*** (Gr. *diadema*)- a symbol of royal power

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- Then, having identified this second ***great sign*** as a ***great red dragon***, in Revelation 12:4 John then goes on to reveal what motivates and fuels Satan's hatred of Israel.

Revelation 12:4— And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

- The first action we see described in v. 4 is an event that **occurred at the time of creation** . . . ***his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth*** . . .

  - Very few specifics are given in Scripture regarding the **fall of Satan**. The two primary Old Testament passages that give us clues are Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 . . .

    Ezekiel 28:12-19— 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. 14 You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. 18 By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. 19 All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more."'"

  - From Ezekiel 28 we glean several important facts regarding Satan original state and what happened.

    - From Ezekiel 28:13 we learn that when God created the heavens and the earth that Satan was in an unfallen state . . . ***You were in Eden, the garden of God***

    - We also see in Ezekiel 28:14 that Satan . . . originally named Lucifer. . . was a cherub. In fact, Lucifer was in one of the highest positions, next to God . . . ***You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God***

- In Ezekiel 28:17 that the reason for Satan's fall was his pride in himself . . . ***Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.*** This sin of pride is also described in Isaiah 14:12-15, recording the **5 "I will" sins that Lucifer commits.**

  Isaiah 14:12-15— *12* ***"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!*** *13* ***But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.*** *14* ***'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'*** *15* ***Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit."***

- The fact that Satan was present in the garden of Eden in an unfallen state (Eze. 28:13) is significant because that means that the fall of Satan occurred in the Old Testament timeline somewhere between Genesis 2:1 . . . the completion of the creation of the earth, and Genesis 2:29 . . . the completion of the creation of Adam and Eve.

- We can discern that Satan was present in an unfallen state when God created the natural universe because God states it to Job in Job 38:7 . . .

  Job 38:4-7— *4* ***"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,*** *5* ***Who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it?*** *6* ***On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,*** *7* ***when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?***

  - The fact that ***all the sons of God shouted for joy*** would seem to indicate that this event occurred before Satan's fall.

- In addition to what other passages teach us about Satan's fall, here in Revelation 12:4 we have an additional significant fact . . . that when Satan was cast out of heaven because of his unrighteousness, **he also took one third of the angels of heaven with him.** That is the meaning of the opening phrase of v. 4 . . .

  Revelation 12:4— And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth.

  - We can discern that the term ***stars*** refers to **angels** because the term is used in Job 38:7 . . . ***the morning stars.***

- And we know that, indeed, one third of the angels fell with Satan because it is stated a few verses later, in Revelation 12:7 and 9 . . .

  Revelation 12:7, 9— *7* ***And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war . . .*** *9* ***And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.***

- The phrase, ***his tail swept away***, indicates the amount of power and influence that Satan had when he rebelled against God. The ***tail*** represents power, and Satan's power and influence were powerful enough to cause one third of the angels in heaven to join in his rebellion against God.

- The fact that God ***threw*** **the fallen angels** ***to the earth*** does not mean that the fallen angels no longer have **any** access to heaven. As we see in Job chapters 1 and 2, there are occasions when God summons angels . . . even Satan . . . to heaven.

  - And, as Revelation 12:10 states, ***the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.***

  - But since their fall, the fallen angels no longer reside in heaven. They have been **thrown down to the earth, where they now wage war with mankind.**

- We also learn in Revelation 12:4 that since the time when Satan was cast out of heaven he has been waging war against God.

  Revelation 12:4— And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

  - First, Satan attempted to spoil God's perfect creation by deceiving Adam and Eve into eating of the forbidden fruit and, thus, causing sin to enter into creation.

  - Then, with the promise of a coming Messiah to restore man's broken relationship to God, Satan continuously attempted to **prevent the birth of the Messiah by destroying the nation** from which Messiah would come. And when that effort failed, He tried to **kill the Messiah**.

    - It is almost certain that when Jesus was crucified on the cross that Satan believed he had succeeded in spoiling God's plan. While Satan is extremely intelligent, he did not understand God's plan of redemption.

    - Had Satan known that the cross of Calvary was God's plan to redeem sinners, he would have done everything in his power to prevent it. But, not knowing God's plan, at the cross Satan mistakenly believed that he had successfully thwarted God's plan!

- The third significant character we meet in Revelation 12:5 . . .

Revelation 12:5— And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

  - The phrase, ***she gave birth to a son, a male child***, is a description of **the incarnation of Jesus Christ.** The ***woman*** . . . **Israel** . . . is the nation through who God would send His Son. This was a fulfillment of God's plan, revealed in Scripture through the prophets.

- Following the statement of His incarnation, Revelation 12:5 then describes the Messiah's destiny . . . ***who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron***, which is a description of Messiah's authority prophesied in Psalm 2:7-9 . . .

  Psalm 2:7-9— 7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. 8 Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.'"

  - The phrase in Revelation 12:5 and Psalm 2:9 . . . ***a rod of iron*** . . . refers to the fact that **Messiah's coming kingdom rule cannot be resisted nor, once it has been established, can it be broken.**

- Then Revelation 12:5 ends with a description of **Messiah's glorious departure in victory** following His successful earthly ministry . . . ***and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.***

- Revelation 12:1-5 is a brief history of **how Satan became the adversary** of God and mankind and **Israel's and Messiah's successful escape from Satan's attempts to destroy them** and disrupt God's redemptive plan. Then, in Revelation 12:6 the description of Satan's future efforts to destroy Israel during the Tribulation . . .

Revelation 12:6— And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- This verse is very important because it helps answer the question, **"how will any of God's people survive the intense persecution by antichrist and the world during the Great Tribulation?"**

  - Part of the answer to that question is provided here. Revelation 12:6 reveals that **Israel will flee Satan's and antichrist's persecution into a place provided by God.**

  - More details on God's protection of Israel from Satan will be provided later in this chapter. **The point here in v. 6 is that Satan's war with God and God's people will reach a feverish pace until he is finally and fully defeated at the Lord's Second Coming.**

- Once again, note the time marker . . . ***one thousand two hundred and sixty days***. As previous pointed out, the four periods of time found in Revelation . . . **3 ½ years, 1260 days, 42 months and "time, times and half a time"** . . . are all used to tell us the length of time of the **Great Tribulation.**

  - And the event that signals the beginning of the **Great Tribulation** is **the abomination of desolation**. It is this event which triggers the nation of Israel to flee from Satan and antichrist. We see this signal to flee in Matthew 24 . . .

    Matthew 24:15-21— 15 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are with child and to those who

nurse babes in those days! *20* ***But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath;*** *21* ***for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.***

- As we see in Matthew 24, the abomination of desolation triggers Satan's and antichrist's full-on attack on everything of God . . . God's name, God's holy temple, God's people, God's authority. It is Satan's final effort to thwart God's plans.

- Amazingly, having once been closest to God in his position as ***the cherub who covers***, Satan knows God better than any creature. He knows he has no power to defeat God, yet he persists. This shows you the irrational hatred Satan has for God and all that God does and has.

Lessons from Revelation 12:1-6

- From the first 6 verses of Revelation 12 we learn some import historical and theological facts.

1. Satan's hatred of Israel stems from his desire to destroy or thwart God's plans for a Messiah to come and save men from the penalty of Adam's sin, which Satan instigated.

2. We learn that when Satan was cast out of heaven, one-third of the angels in heaven joined his rebellion and they were also cast out of heaven.

3. Though Satan's efforts to thwart God's plan of salvation was defeated at the cross, he will continue to pursue and attempt to destroy God's people.

4. The pursuit of Israel will become so intense during the Great Tribulation that it will be necessary for God to supernaturally protect Israel from Satan's attacks.

Part 2— Satan's expulsion from heaven (v. 7-12)

- Following John concise recitation of Satan's history of war against God and God's people in v. 1-6, in v. 7-12 John describes a future event in which Satan attempts to wage war in heaven, but is defeated and permanently expelled from heaven.

Revelation 12:7-12— 7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

- Revelation 12:7 is a transition from a recitation of Satan's history of hatred and persecution of Israel and her offspring, Messiah, to events concerning Satan during the Tribulation.

  - Notice in v. 7 that John begins, ***and there was war in heaven***. The verb ***there was*** appears, in our English translations, to indicate **a past event**. But the Greek aorist here is **proleptic**. A more accurate English translation would be ***there arose*** or ***there came to pass***, indicating a certain event that is yet future.

  - It is likely that this ***war in heaven*** will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation, when Satan and antichrist ramp up their persecution of Israel and the saints.

- Then in v. 7 we see who it is that engages in this battle with Satan . . . ***Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon.***

  - ***Michael*** is one of the few named angels in Scripture, seen only in Daniel, Jude and Revelation. From these references we learn these things about ***Michael***:

    1. ***Michael*** is an ***archangel*** (Jude 9). An ***archangel*** is the highest order of angels. **Lucifer** was also an archangel.

    2. In Daniel 10:13 ***Michael*** is called ***one of the chief princes***, in Daniel 10:21 he is called ***your prince***, and in Daniel 12:1 he entitled ***the great prince***. These terms are probably descriptive of his position as an ***archangel***.

    3. In Revelation 12:7 we see that ***Michael*** leads the army of holy ***angels waging war with the dragon***. This confirms ***Michael's*** role as ***archangel*** is one of great authority.

    4. In Daniel 10:13 and Jude 9 we learn that ***Michael*** has previously battled Satan.

    5. From Daniel 10:21 and 12:1, it appears that one of ***Michael's*** roles is that of **guardian angel over the nation of Israel**, since he is referred to as ***Michael your prince*** (Dan. 10:21) and ***the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people*** (Dan. 12:1).

- One of the interesting things we also learn in Revelation 12:7 is that there is ***war in heaven***. This seems contradictory, since we associate ***heaven*** with blessed peace.

  - The term for ***war*** (Greek: *polēmos*) means "to fight, battle, quarrel or dispute."

  - We don't know what form of ***war*** will take place in heaven with beings that cannot die. We don't know if there are any weapons involved. But we do learn in Daniel 10:13 that when God sent ***Michael*** to bring a message to Daniel that ***Michael*** was delayed for ***twenty-one days*** by Satan. So, apparently supernatural battles can be lengthy.

  - Pastor Tom Pennington says of this ***war in heaven*** that "this is not a minor conflict. The language describes the fury of an all-out war. In complete desperation, Satan will launch an ill-conceived attack on heaven itself to unseat God from His throne and prevent Messiah from establishing His kingdom."

- So, in Revelation 12:7 we see that there is a heavenly war in which ***Michael and his angels wage war with the dragon and his angels.*** But the outcome is never in doubt, and we learn in Revelation 12:8 . . .

Revelation 12:8— and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

  - From this verse we learn that ***the dragon and his angels*** are defeated and that they are **banished from heaven . . . *there was no longer a place found for them in heaven***.

  - Up to this time, the fallen angels still had access to heaven, although we don't know what sort of access. But we do know that they appeared in heaven on occasion, such as Job 1 and 2

    Job 1:6— Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

    Job 2:1— Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

  - We don't know what other fallen angels were permitted to appear in heaven, but we do know from Jude 6 . . .

    Jude 6— And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

    - Jude 6 indicates that there are fallen angels who committed acts that moved God to incarcerate them in the **abyss . . . *eternal bonds under darkness*** . . . forever. How many angels are incarcerated is unknown, but the fact that Satan has an army of angels to battle in heaven means that there are many fallen angels serving Satan.

- As a result of his defeat in his heavenly war, in Revelation 12:9-12 we learn what happens in the aftermath of Satan's final desperate battle against God . . .

Revelation 12:9— And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

  - With the defeat of Satan by ***Michael and his angels***, God permanently banishes Satan and all the fallen angels from heaven and His presence. They are ***thrown down to the earth***. Where Satan had once been able to move between heaven and earth, he and his angels are now confined to the earth.

    - The fact that Satan and the fallen angels are banished from heaven is emphasized by the fact that the term ***thrown down*** is **used 3 times in Revelation 12:9.** The banishment of the fallen angels is total and complete. **From this time, forward, heaven is forever purged of evil.**

  - Interestingly, in Revelation 12:9 John refers to Satan by **5 descriptive terms** . . .

1. *The great dragon*. We previous examined this term and saw that a ***dragon*** is fierce, ferocious, terrifying and lethal.

2. *The serpent of old*. This term refers to Satan's role in deceiving Adam and Eve into eating of the forbidden fruit.

3. *The devil*. The term ***devil*** (Greek: *diabolos*) means "slanderer or accuser." It is descriptive of what Satan does.

- The scholar George Caird says of ***the devil*** that, "his task is to arraign men before the bar of divine justice. When not actively doing this, he roams the earth collecting evidence for the next prosecution."

4. *The Satan*. Though it is never used in our English translations, the term ***Satan*** is always used with the definite article, meaning ***the Satan.*** The word ***Satan*** (Greek: *satanas*) means "adversary," which very well describes who ***Satan*** is and what he does.

5. *Who deceives*. The term ***deceives*** (Greek: *planaō*) means "to seduce or lead astray," and very well describes how Satan operates. Very rarely does Satan attack directly. His attacks are most often with subtlety, without being perceived by his victims. He whispers in our ears.

- Then, with Satan and his army of fallen angels having been permanently banished from any access to heaven or God, in Revelation 12:10-12 we see the response in heaven . . .

Revelation 12:10-12— 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

- First, we notice that ***a loud voice*** speaks. Is this a single voice or many voices saying as one? Grammatically, the word ***voice*** is singular. But the singular word, ***voice***, has previously been used to speak of many, such as in Revelation 5:11 . . .

  Revelation 5:11— And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne . . .

  - In the words that the ***loud voice*** speaks in v. 10 we see a reference to ***the kingdom of our God***, which lends credence to the view that ***voice*** refers to a multitude in heaven, speaking or singing as one.

- Though it is not specified, it appears that the words in v. 10-12 are a **heavenly song**.

  - Robert Thomas points out that this quote or song has 3 parts or stanzas:

    1. The arrival of God's kingdom and Christ's authority (v. 10)

2. The victory over Satan of the saints in Christ (v. 11)

3. The celebration of Satan's expulsion and his impending defeat (v. 12)

- The first part of the first stanza is **proleptic** and begins, ***"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come…"***

  - Here we see that the celebration in heaven results from God's ***salvation*** of God's people who still live on the earth and the ***salvation*** of the earth itself when Christ comes to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

  - This ***salvation*** will be accomplished by God's sovereign ***power***, when God has smashed the rebellion of Satan, the antichrist and ***those who dwell on the earth***.

  - And with Christ's victory as His Second Coming, ***the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ*** **will be instituted.**

- Then, with God's and Christ's victory declared, in the second part of the first stanza we see the cause of their celebration . . . our antagonist and ***the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.***

  - Where Satan was previously permitted to come before God to accuse the brethren ***day and night***, with his banishment from heaven, those accusations now cease. Satan's voice in heaven is silenced.

- The second stanza . . . v. 11 . . . is comprised of 3 components.

  - First, we see that ***they [our brethren] overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb***.

    - It is the atoning blood of Christ, applied to all who believe, that secures our salvation. It is because of ***the blood of the Lamb*** that Satan's accusations . . . valid as they are . . . do not condemn us. Christ has paid the penalty for the sins of the saints, once for all.

  - Secondly, we see that ***the brethren*** **receive salvation** ***because of the word of their testimony.***

    - It is our declaration of faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son and our Savior that secures our salvation.

  - Thirdly, we see that ***the brethren did not love their life even to death***.

    - With Satan's and antichrist's incessant and horrific persecution, ***the brethren did not love their life even to death.*** This indicates that the martyred saints lived in readiness to die for Christ as the ultimate demonstration of faith.

- The third stanza . . . v. 12 . . . is a call to celebration in heaven, but also a warning to the earth that Satan is about to do his worst in a last ditch effort to resist God.

- First, with the reality of God's victory through ***Michael and his angels*** and Satan's expulsion from heaven there is a call for celebration in heaven . . . ***For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.***

- Second, having been ***thrown down to earth***, there is a warning to ***the earth*** that Satan is exceedingly angry and is about to unleash his final efforts on ***the earth . . . Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.***

  - Robert Thomas paraphrases . . . "Bad times face the inhabitants of the whole terrestrial world because of a new full time occupant."

- Amazingly, even though he is fully aware and ***knows that he has only a short time*** before Christ triumphal Second Coming, Satan persists with his rebellion to the very end.

  - John Phillips say that "Satan is now like a caged lion enraged beyond words by the limitations now placed upon his freedom. He picks himself up from the dust of the earth, shakes his fist at the sky, and glares around, choking with fury for ways to vent his hatred and his spite upon mankind."

Part 3— Satan's final effort to destroy Israel (v. 13-17)

- In Revelation 12:13-17 the scene shifts from the heavenly celebration of Satan's defeat to the events of Satan's final, desperate effort to destroy Israel.

Revelation 12:13-17— 13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

- In v. 13 we see what happens after v. 9, when ***Satan and his angels were thrown down to the earth*** . . . ***he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.***

  - This statement in v. 13 gives us **the reason the events of v. 6 take place. Remember . . .**

    Revelation 12:6— And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

  - Here, in v. 13 we are told that following his banishment from heaven, Satan begins his all-out persecution of Israel . . . ***the woman who gave birth to the male child***.

- Where Revelation 12:6 states that ***the woman fled into the wilderness***, in Revelation 12:14 we learn that Israel has help making her escape . . . ***And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.***

    - Regarding her escape from Satan, in v. 14 we see that she escapes by ***the two wings of the great eagle given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness.***

- **A major interpretive question** is, **what are the *two wings of the great eagle***?

    - Some modern interpreters of this verse suggest that John is referring to modern aircraft that are capable of carrying hundreds of people at a time over great distances.

    - Others have suggested a supernatural event in which literal birds are given the ability to carry people to places of safety.

    - The most likely answer is that language used here . . . ***two wings of the great eagle*** **that are** ***given to the woman*** . . . is figurative language that describes how Israel is able to supernaturally escape. The figurative language describes how God supernaturally intervenes to provide Israel's escape. This is the same language that God uses to describe Israel's escape from the Egyptians in Exodus 19:4.

      Exodus 19:4— 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.

    - As the commentators, Keil and Delitzsch, state "***eagles' wings*** are figurative, and denote the strong and loving care of God. The eagle watches over its young in the most careful manner, flying under them when it leads them from the nest, least they should fall upon the rocks, and be injured or destroyed."

Interpretive Question: When v. 14 says that **Israel will *fly into the wilderness***, should this flight be interpreted a literal flight **in the air**, figuratively as being **"with great speed,"** or symbolically as being **under the divine protection** while make her escape, as Israel did from the Egyptians?

- This is a difficult question to answer. In the phrase ***fly into the wilderness***, the word ***fly*** literally describes flight through the air. Since nothing is impossible with God, it is possible that God provides for supernatural flight for those Jews who take flight. It is also conceivable that God will do as He did with the nation of Israel in the Exodus and simply provide the escapees with divine protection during their flight from danger.

Interpretive Question: Another major interpretive question that arises from John's revelation in v. 14 is, **where on earth will Israel find refuge from Satan, antichrist and the world for 3 ½ years?** (Rev. 12:6, 14)

- One of the popular views by biblical scholars is that God will supernaturally help Israel flee east or southeast, to the region near the Dead Sea. The reason their flight will be east southeast is because that is the only mountainous region. West is the Mediterranean Sea and southwest is into the desert. In the region east and southeast of Israel is a mountainous region that was

known in Old Testament times as ***Edom, Moab and Ammon***, which is east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River.

- Within ancient Edom is the ancient city of Petra, which has intrigued scholars and historians for years. Petra is literally carved out of the rocky cliffs and canyons in the rugged terrain southeast of the Dead Sea, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. It is unknown if Petra has ever been occupied. For all appearances it seems to be a ready-made location for a large group of people to hide.

- The other popular location for Israel to flee to is the entire mountainous region on the east southeast side of the Dead Sea, in the modern country of Jordan. In antiquity Jordan was known as Edom and Moab. The reason this region is suggested is because it is prophesied in Daniel 11:41 . . .

  Daniel 11:41— "He [antichrist] will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

- So, both Petra and the mountains of Edom and Moab are strong possibilities for Israel's flight into ***the wilderness***. It is interesting to note that whatever place God leads Israel to is, as Revelation 12:6 says, is ***a place prepared by God***.

Interpretive Question: Another question is, how many or what percentage of the Jews will be protected by God in ***the wilderness***? After all, there will be millions of Jews in the world and tens of thousands in Jerusalem at the time of the Abomination of Desolation.

- It is unlikely that all the Jews in the world will suddenly be whisked away to a protected location. It is more likely that it is the Jews in and around Jerusalem who will be rescued, as we see in Matthew 24:15-16 . . .

  Matthew 24:15-16— 15 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains

- It is also important to understand that not every Jew in Judea will flee into ***the wilderness***, but only those who are elect. We see this stated in Daniel 12:1-2 . . .

  Daniel 12:1— "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

  - I previously pointed out to you that Zechariah 12:10 and 13:8-9 reveal that at the end of the Tribulation, when the Lord returns, that two-thirds of the Jews will die while one-third will survive, have their spiritual eyes opened and will be saved.

    Zechariah 12:10— "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they

have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.

Zechariah 13:8-9— *8* ***"And it will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it.*** *9* ***And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"***

- Revelation 12:14 closes with a statement that explains what God does when He takes ***the woman into the wilderness . . .***

  Revelation 12:14— *14* ***And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.***

  - First, as is stated in v. 6 and v. 14, God ***nourishes the woman***. Just as God provided manna for the Israelites in the Exodus and for Elijah at the brook of Cherith (1 Kings 17:1-6), it seems likely that this ***nourishment*** will be God's supernatural provision for His people.

    - And we learn that this ***nourishing*** of ***the woman in the wilderness*** will last **for 3 ½ years** . . . the duration of the second half of the Tribulation.

  - Second, we see in Revelation 12:14 that the reason for God's supernatural protection will be to protect ***the woman from the presence of the serpent***. As we see in Revelation 12:13 and 17, when Satan is banished from heaven, he is enraged and sets out to do everything he can to destroy ***the woman***.

- While God is supernaturally protecting those Jews who ***flee into the wilderness***, it is apparent that Satan knows their location because, as we read in v. 15, he attempts to attack them . . .

Revelation 12:15— And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

- Here in v. 15 we see that it is Satan (***the serpent***) and not antichrist who is determined to pursue ***the woman***. And Satan attempts to destroy ***the woman in the wilderness*** by ***pouring water like a river out of his mouth***. The prompts an immediate question . . .

Interpretive question: Is this a reference to ***water like a river*** to interpreted as literal water or is it symbolic?

- It is possible that a literal meaning is intended, that while ***the woman*** is in ***the wilderness*** that she is located in a place that is susceptible to flooding.

- But it seems more likely that a symbolic meaning is intended. Since the term, ***the serpent***, is not a literal snake, but symbolic of Satan, it is likely that the ***water*** is symbolic as well.

- In the Old Testament floods symbolized trouble (2 Sam 22:17; Job 27:20; Ps 18:16, 32:6, 69:1-2,13,14, 124:2-5, 144:7), as well as an invading army (Jer 4:8, 47:2; Dan 11:26).

- If a symbolic meaning is intended, the picture in v. 15 is that of Satan sending forces attempting to sweep toward the Jews' hiding place ***like a flood*** in order to destroy them.

- Then, in response to Satan's attempt to destroy ***the woman in the wilderness***, in v. 16 we God's hand of protection upon ***the woman . . .***

Revelation 12:16— And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

- The vivid imagery here in v. 16 is very similar to that of Exodus 15:12 in which God supernaturally protects the fleeing Israelites from Pharaoh's army and Numbers 16:32-33 in which God causes the earth to ***open its mouth and swallowed up*** **Korah and all the households of those who belonged to Korah.**

  Exodus 15:12— "Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

  Numbers 16:32-33— 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions. 33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

  - With earthquakes becoming more prevalent as the tribulation progresses, it is possible that this may occur. Recall that the sixth seal marks a ***great earthquake***, which coincides with the midpoint of the tribulation, and with ***the woman's*** flight, a ***great earthquake*** could possibly be what stops Satan's attack upon Israel.

  - It is very likely that Satan moves the antichrist to send a large military force to pursue and destroy ***the woman in the wilderness***. And just as ***the two witnesses*** are able to call down fire from heaven to destroy those who seek to harm them, God, likewise, causes the earth to open up and swallow an attacking army, just as Korah and his entire household were swallowed up by the earth.

- Then, seeing his efforts to destroy ***the woman*** thwarted, in v. 17 we see Satan's reaction . . .

Revelation 12:17— And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

- Having taken his best shot at getting at ***the woman*** and seeing his attack defeated by God, an ***enraged*** Satan abandons his efforts to get at ***the woman in the wilderness*** and turns his attention to ***making war with the rest of her offspring***.

Interpretive question: Who are ***the rest of her offspring***?

- First of all, pronoun ***her*** is in reference to ***the woman***. In the context of this chapter, the term ***the woman*** is a reference to **Israel.** Therefore, ***her offspring*** is a reference to **Israelites who did not escape into *the wilderness***.

- But we also learn in v. 17 that those who are identified as ***her offspring*** are also described as those ***who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.***

  1. The phrase, ***who keep the commandments of God***, is not a reference to the Old Testament Mosaic law commandments, but the Lord's New Testament commandments. These commandments are the **10 commandments of the Old Testament condensed down to 2 . . .**

  Matthew 22:36-40— 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

  1 John 3:23— And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

  2. The phrase, ***and hold to the testimony of Jesus,*** refers to the testimony that Jesus Himself gave. **In other words**, they are holding to the truths that Jesus taught that are revealed in the New Testament.

  - **It is significant to note** that John says of himself in Revelation 1:9 that he was exiled to Patmos, ***because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.***

- It has been suggested that ***the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus*** is a reference to ***the 144,000 witnesses*** in Revelation 7.

  - With the continuity of Rev 12:1-14:5, one must see the portrayal of the victorious 144,000 in Rev 14:1-5 as a sequel to the battle of the dragon's two emissaries (beast/false prophet) with ***"the rest of her seed"*** in Rev 13.

- While it is almost certain that the 144,000 is included in this category of ***the rest of her offspring*** (see Rev. 14:1-5), there is no reason to limit ***the rest of her offspring*** **only** to the 144,000 witnesses. Certainly there are Jews who have received faith that are scattered throughout the earth who will also be persecuted by Satan.

- Here in Revelation 12 we are given insight into several of the questions that Christians have regarding how, when and why Satan does the things he does and how God protects His people.
  - In this section we learned that Satan's war against God's people began in Genesis 2, after he was cast out of heaven. Satan's war with mankind has been especially ferocious toward Israel because it was from Israel that Messiah was to come. His desire was to destroy Messiah by destroying Israel. Amazingly, though Satan failed to prevent Messiah from being born and failed from keeping Messiah successfully completing his mission . . . **despite the fact that Satan has already been defeated** by Christ's resurrection, **he still persists in his single-minded pursuit to attempt to defeat God or thwart God's plans**.